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THE CAUSE AND REMEDY

FOR

HARD TIMES, POVERTY, MISERY, CRIME and VICE.

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G. S. ROBERTS.

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THE CAUSE AND REMEDY FOR

HARD TIMES, POVERTY, MISERY, CRIME AND VICE.

By G. S. Roberts.

You know the cry of "hard times" has become universal, you have felt its pangs personally, it has entered your own home directly or indirectly. You have known of the unavoidable misery, suicides and sufferings of the people, caused by circumstances over which they had no control for the last twenty five years, constantly growing worse year by year. Now this applies to *you*, whether you are a mechanic or a millionaire.

Why do you submit to these terribly infernal wrongs? Don't you know a remedy, or do you glory in seeing people reduced to the very minimum, physically and mentally?

You know that poverty, misery, destitution and discouragement surround us, and, in fact, you are well aware of the condition of the masses. The misery is not confined wholly to the unemployed, who suffer and die for the want of food, clothing and shetler; but among the balance, who are worried and worn out physically and mentally with the unfavorable condition of

devices for the past fifty years, and more especially within the last twenty-five years, regardless of the consequences, which evidently did not enter into the heads of our politicians and great men of our own time, who couldn't see a hole through a barrel with both heads knocked out.

But now the crisis has come, which we feel more and more every day; the market is filled with these machines, and they no longer give employment to the men that made them, except as operators, and consequently the overcrowded labor market is the result. Such a continuation of enforced idleness has filled the country with idle, hungry, desperate men, constantly growing greater and more desperate; such conditions drive men to suicide, drink, murder, and everything except the noble, intelligent being designed by his Maker.

And on the other hand, such an army of unemployed become a menace to society and a millstone around the necks of capital and labor. As they are non-consumers and do not purchase the products of the factory, as they have no means, they are supported by charitable individuals, institutions, jails, prisons, etc., and this expense must be borne by taxpayers.

They are a menace to the laborer and are the direct cause of the extremely low wages which prevail, as they are only too glad to take your place in the factory or elsewhere if you ask an increase of wages, consequently you have no power to act and are at the mercy of the employ-

er. For example, refer to the great strikes throughout the country—"Homestead," "Brooklyn Trolley," and others too numerous to mention. No labor organization can, or ever will by their present method of working, prevent this state of affairs, for as a rule they do not create employment for a single man. They are simply trying to enhance the price of labor upon a falling market, which is inconsistent with all laws, both human and divine.

The present appears to be a critical time in the history of labor. Within the past few years workingmen have suddenly come into great power. Their more compact organizations, their more effective weapons of war have given them advantages that they never had before. The question of the hour is whether they can use this power temperately and wisely. There are ominous signs of a disposition to employ it passionately and vindictively. Men who speak in the interest of selfish capital are heard to express the confident hope that the workingmen will soon overstep the bounds of prudence and justice and ruin their own prospects. That is the real danger. Doubtless it is hard for those who are smarting under a sense of injustice to be always temperate and judicious; but the welfare of these men depends on keeping their heads cool. It is easy for the organizations of labor to cripple by unreasonable demands the industry of whole sections. They have done this thing already more than once. In the stoppages and

re-adjustments thus occurring great suffering is caused and no advantage is gained. An unjust demand, even if it be temporarily enforced, always re-acts on those who make it. The working classes now have tremendous power. They may easily employ it for self-destruction. It is quite possible for them to use their power tyrannically, and tyranny will not thrive in this day, the tyranny of a mob, no more than the tyranny of an autocrat. This weapon of the boycott, with which the labor unions have lately armed themselves, is pretty sure to prove a boomerang. If they use it recklessly there may easily arise a consumers' union to fight them with their own fire, to patronize those whom they proscribe. Already the popular indignation at the unscrupulous use of this weapon is so strong that the publication of a boycott has proved in several cases an excellent advertisement of the boycotted dealer. With all the improved enginery of war the labor unions are sure to find that war is dangerous business. It is all the more dangerous because of these improved weapons. It can never be anything else but perilous and destructive business. Let not these combatants on either side suppose that they can hurt and maim their antagonists and yet not harm themselves. Over all this wretched strife one can imagine those better angels of our nature, whose ministry Abraham Lincoln once pathetically but vainly invoked, bending with divine compassion and crying to the embattled

hosts with solemn rebuke and benignant appeal. Is it well, brother men, is it well to fight? Is it not better to be friends? Are you not all children of our Father? Nay, are you not, as the great apostle said, members one of another? Your war is not only wholesale fratricide, it is social suicide. It is little to say that you cannot afford to fight. You cannot live apart; you must live for one another. That is the way you were made to live, and you will never have anything but trouble and sorrow till you learn that way and walk in it. The stars in their courses will fight against you until you make peace with one another. Have we not had more than enough of war and its dismal noises and its spectral train of woes—more than enough of silent looms and fireless forges, of children's faces pale with hunger, and women's sunken eyes, of hearts made fierce and hard by long-cherished enmities, of class arrayed against class, and neighbor against neighbor? Oh, put it all away from you, the hate, the suspicion, the scorn. Stand here together, brethren, as you are helpers of one another, as you must be, and promise one another that you will do what you can, every one of you, to bring the day when between Labor and Capital there shall be no longer war, but peace for evermore.

And my experience with labor leaders has been that they were working and studying the means to hold their offices rather than the actual means of improving the condition of the masses.

And if the following means are adopted and thoroughly understood by the people, their services, along with their other expenses (which are enormous throughout the country, and which are being defrayed by a people the least able to bear it), would soon be cancelled. Leaders of such need not be alarmed, for when these changes take place there will necessarily be a demand for their services in other directions far superior from both social and financial standpoints. The desirable features of this reform are not months or years being developed, but immediately after its adoption from the first day we become beneficiary; for when all people are given employment we are all benefited socially and financially. Sickness and disease are as unnecessary as sin in my estimation, and would comparatively become extinct if we knew enough to adopt the means at our disposal. We would make school teachers and dancing-masters of the doctors, and school houses and dance halls of the jails and prisons—for what other use would we have for them? When a man can earn his bread by the sweat of his brow he would rather do it than go there for it, or even take a chance of going there to avoid perspiration.

Labor is a pleasure with us all when we are not required to overdo ourselves for little or nothing in return, as is the case with many. When such is the case it becomes a drudgery and discourages all.

Labor is a commodity in the market, like

apples, potatoes or anything else, and is for sale to the highest bidder; and certainly no sober-minded, reasonable man can expect his employer to pay more than the market price, or even less, if he can help it, any more than the laborer would pay more than he was obliged to for a peck of apples or potatoes; they are both free, moral agents, and are justified in the eyes of God and man to act their own discretion in trade. But this is not the point where a bearing is to be found; it's not what a man will do or can be coaxed to do, that's optional with him; that's not business, as we term it, it's what he's forced to do. And the supply and demand of labor, like anything else, is the medium which regulates its market price.

The influx of machinery and all labor saving devices are being brought into the market and they are all working in competition with labor. The erroneous idea has been entertained by some, and even offered up as an argument, that it gave employment to men to make the machine. Such an idea is groundless. It certainly gives employment to thousands and at the same time ten times as many are thrown out in consequence of it. If such were not the case, machinery would be a failure.

For instance, the "McKay" machine costs for labor to build $100 00, representing the labor of forty men one day, @ $2 50 per day. This machine will do the work of forty men the first day, consequently it has paid for itself the first

day it runs; and will continue to do this for a business life time, at an expense that would not furnish one man with tobacco. Now is it to be wondered at that nearly one-half the people are idle, in consequence, in this country?

The question naturally arises, what is to be done? Would you dispose of machinery? I most emphatically answer, *no*, as I am in favor of labor saving devices and love to see progress and invention; but bear in mind we must adopt measures whereby we may reap the benefits therefrom. If we are to have all these improvements, and cannot enjoy them or even acquire the means for sustenance in consequence of their being, we would be a thousand times better off without them.

But to dispose of them is not the proper course to take; there are other alternatives, whereby we may be benefited a thousand fold. Which are the great and only panaceas for all our ills? These are *less hours of labor*, a tariff sufficient to protect all our industries, and a *restriction of emigration.* Regardless of all the isms, the success of this nation under its individual system of controling its industries has excelled all others, as a man will take a greater interest in that he feels his own and will carry the same to a more successful issue, and we certainly do not wish to overthrow a system that has made us foremost in the universe. It is not a fault with the system, but a mistake on our own part in consequence of ignorance in not taking ad-

vantage of the progress we have made and give more time for the fiddle and the bow. The shovel and the hoe have been in the hands of a few now to the extent that they on the one hand have no time or music left in them to fiddle, and on the other they haven't the means to get a fiddle; so taking all things into consideration, there is very little fiddling and happiness in the nation, yes, I may say in the world, compared with what there should be.

Enforced idleness means destruction to any people or nation. The old adage that an idle mind is the devil's workshop is as true as ever was spoken, and the only way to obviate this is through the natural law of everything—supply and demand. The demand should equal the supply; instead of this being the case, the supply of labor exceeds the demand by one-half, or there are about two men for a job throughout the country.

The limit to what the hours should be reduced is governed by whatever may be required to give lucrative employment to every man or woman in the land. For when a man is willing and begging for a chance to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, and cannot get it, life becomes a mockery and a bore in the sight of God and man. The stipulated working time is to the nation what the governor is to the steam engine, a means of keeping it at a normal rate of speed, otherwise it would dash itself to pieces.

I think six hours per day would be sufficient

to provide all requirements of life. I am positive that this would be ample time in the shoe industry, and I am positive from statistics and a general knowledge of all other industries that this would be ample time to enable them to meet every demand made upon them.

The demand for fewer hours of labor must be fairly considered. With the continual improvements in machinery the world's wants can be supplied by six hours' work in a day. Would it not be vastly better for the health, the morals and the thrift of the community to have our shops and factories going six hours a day all the year round than to have them go ten hours for six months and be idle all day for six months in the year, which is the present order in large sections of the country? The question whether the daily working time can be reduced one-half with no diminution in the daily wages is a question that must be settled on economical rather than sentimental principles. But some interesting experiments tend to show that even when machinery is a large factor in production the products of six hours' work will be much more than one-half of ten hours' work. The reduction of the time will not proportionately reduce the product and should not therefore proportionately reduce the wages. It is often said that increased wages and shorter hours will only promote recklessness and dissipation among the men, that the addition to their income would go to the saloons, that the enlargement of their leisure would result in de-

bauchery. Such statements are too sweeping. Some of the more ignorant and degraded of the men would be affected in this way no doubt, but it would not be true of all of them. The new hope, the enlarged opportunity, would make the better elements among them self-respecting and frugal. Their leisure would not all go to the uses of the flesh. The most careful English student of this question, Prof. Leone Levi, bears this testimony. As a rule and in the long run, scarcity, low wages and scantiness of food go hand in hand with high mortality, drunkenness and crime, while abundance, high wages and full consumption go hand in hand with low mortality, temperance and good behavior. A sudden increase of wages, as in the colliery districts in 1872-3, may find the recipients utterly unprepared for their good fortune. And so we have heard of miners indulging in champagne wine, and of puddlers purchasing for themselves seal skin waistcoats. But reason speedily asserts her higher sway. The housewife eagerly arrests a portion of the higher wages to furnish the bare rooms, to fill the empty cupboard and cloth the children. Little by little as the novel condition with its bountiful stores is realized self-respect increases, sobriety of conduct is induced and the family as a whole rises to habits of virtue and prosperity. This is the result which we have good reasons to expect, not universally at once, but on the whole and in the long run, from the improvement in the laborers' condition.

Some laborers cannot bear prosperity, some employers cannot. Most employers, I dare say, have an abiding conviction that it would not hurt them in the least to be a little better off, and they may safely reason in the same way with regard to the men. On the whole and in the long run happiness is better for the men than misery, plenty better than want, hope better than despair. Every effort that is made for the amelioration of humanity rests on that assumption.

Understand, this must become universal and must be enforced in all States: Six hours for factories and all manual labor and ten hours for stores; this would be four hours per day less all around.

There is a question that naturally confronts us here and that particularly concerns the employer; it is this: "How can a man pay ten hours' pay for six hours' work?" This is easy; a man can afford to pay just what his competitor does, whether it be five dollars for one hour's work or one dollar for fifteen. A word right here also is necessary to the mechanic, as such questions as these naturally arise: "What benefit will he derive from this, twice the pay and twice the cost of living expenses?" I will tell you right here in the first place, you have four more hours per day for recreation, enjoyment and improvement; you have steady employment twelve months in the year, instead of nine or six months as is the case in a great many instances; the

cost of living would only be one-third more instead of double, as taxes and expenses incurred from charitable institutions, jails, prisons, reformatories, poorhouses and thousands of ways which money goes to help those who cannot help themselves, would be decreased. You may think these institutions cost you nothing; they may not directly, but indirectly they cost you dearly; whatever your landlord pays you pay; it all comes from the laborer. The unemployed cost you every day, as much as you receive; for instance, you work for two dollars per day; were it not for the unemployed who are waiting for work you would and could get twice two dollars per day; were it not for the long work day it would be unnecessary to prohibit the employment of prisoners in the manufacture of any article, as the Prison Contract Labor Law was established for the protection of outside labor; they would thereby become self-sustaining and relieve the country of millions of dollars yearly.

All stores and factories could be run cheaper in regard to heat, light, etc. Four hours per day less these expenses would amount to millions of dollars yearly.

It is the impression among some people that the four hours would be abused and spent in saloons, billiard rooms and in general debauchery, but I have never found one of these people who thought that they themselves would abuse the opportunity; so "Judge not, that you be not judged." This is a mistake. The majority, yes

I may say the whole, will profit by such reform, and it would make men of what are now vagabonds, as there is nothing that improves and bolsters up mankind like prosperity. With a chance to accumulate a few dollars it soon transforms a forlorn, discouraged man into an entirely different being.

Right here, also, is a splendid opportunity for some *crank* to throw cold water upon the only opportunity a poor discouraged man may have had in a lifetime, by saying some men wouldn't amount to anything under any circumstances. This may be true in some cases, but it is to a great extent attributed to the circumstances under which we live that make us what we are, and the better the surroundings the better will be the results. This rule applies to all animal and vegetable creation, and the *crank*, as aforesaid, who always complains is nothing but the offspring of a diseased or unhealthy father or mother, caused directly or indirectly by the very same conditions which he now tries to avoid improving. Such fools have always existed from earliest ages, and it is this deficiency in man that has caused so much misery and suffering and so retarded civilization from the beginning. It is the liberal-minded philanthropist and not the narrow-minded and the arrogant that have enhanced civilization and given us the opportunities for our advancement Physically, Mentally, Socially and Spiritually. Had the crank have held domain over us we would never have

enjoyed either. But it seems that right is justified, regardless of these blockheads, in time. So let all liberal-minded people do all in their power for the advancement of mankind. We are right and we are sure to accomplish our design.

The cause of drunkenness, as a rule, is poverty, used as a temporary means of drowning sorrow and miserable thoughts. Misery likes company, and they can find a plenty of this in the saloon, whereas under more favorable conditions man would seek a higher plane of thought and action.

I thoroughly believe and know that mankind is entitled to more and better opportunities to improve their conditions, and am well aware that there is frozen music in many a heart that the beams of encouragement would melt into glorious song.

We should be more earnest in our efforts to assist man from his present degraded condition, which is wholly due to circumstances directly or indirectly over which he has no control. Not altogether are they tramps and total wrecks, but the majority of men are physically and mentally unsound in consequence of overwork and worry. Let us then strive to adopt this, the only means to elevate, to improve man, to enlighten his mind, to enlarge the sphere of his affections and lead him to the cultivation of that true fraternal relation designed by the noble order of his being. It is the duty of every loyal citizen to himself, his family, the present and coming generations.

Now that I have dealt sufficiently, I believe, with this most important issue, I will call your attention to the other important issue which seriously demands the immediate attention of all true American citizens. It is the emigration of foreigners, which is constantly flooding the country with an ignorant, undesirable population.

Emigration should be restricted for a term of years, such as will enable us to ascertain our own social and industrial condition. Five years would be sufficient, for if the hours of labor should be reduced to six hours per day the influx of foreigners would be so great that even that would prove inadequate; consequently what would have proven a grand success would fall to the ground a dismal failure. Furthermore, we do not wish to be swamped with an ignorant, foreign element, as we cannot properly care for and educate them in such boundless numbers.

"Charity begins at home," and we will find that we have all we can provide for here at present. Concerning the constitutionality of restricting emigration, would say, anything is constitutional that is conducive to the welfare and happiness of mankind, and if the opportunity to procure food, clothing and shelter is not conducive to right, to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, I don't know what is. And this cannot be done as long as there are ten men for a job.

Why should America be made a dumping-

ground of creation? Let foreign countries adopt such reforms as we find conducive to our advancement and emancipation, then they will be contented to remain at home. We have enough here at present, and are well aware that too rapid growth is an unhealthy and unreliable growth. The fact is, the hours of labor should have been reduced in foreign lands forty years ago. We cannot afford to sacrifice our happiness and future prospects on account of the ignorant stubbornness of foreign nations. If they fail to adopt a good thing when they see it, let them pay the penalty and not ruin this country with their ancient ideas; we are living in the nineteenth century, an age of progress and invention, and cannot be governed by the old-time ideas of Methuselah.

These laws can only be brought about by legislative enactment, through the nomination and election of men by the ballot, who will work for the benefit of humanity, men who will sacrifice their lives rather than betray their countrymen and prolong the misery of innocent men, women and children.

Vote for no man who is not a worker for less hours and a restriction of emigration. Such men do exist and are ready and willing to offer themselves up to the people for the enforcement, if need be, of the precepts of this book. Never in this world will the chances in life be improved for the betterment of man's condition, but on the other hand will be constantly growing worse,

until these ideas are complied with by this nation.

The facts of the matter are these: We have been striving to displace labor for years, and we have pretty nearly accomplished our design. It is not the fault of capital, as is generally supposed, for the capitalist, as a rule, does nothing in the way of invention; they do not invent a machine or drive a spike, and I doubt if half of them could and drive it straight. So if it is labor saving devices that have thrown men out of employment it must certainly be laid at the door of the mechanic, of which he may well be proud; for, as aforesaid, if the working time is reduced it becomes the greatest of all blessings to mankind, for it enables us to have all the requirements of life and work less time to get them, thereby improving the condition of all men by giving more time for social, mental and physical enjoyment and improvement. Now then it must be admitted that it is the course of natural events and it came upon us like a dream. But now that we have fully awakened to the situation let us as speedily as possible adopt the means presented here for the emancipation of the people, and be ever watchful till the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

The workingmen of this country will do well to give this subject serious consideration. Their rights to combine for the promotion of their own interests cannot be denied. The attempts of some to deprive them of this right are tyrannical,

but the correlative of the right to form such combinations is the right of every man to refuse to enter into them. That right they must recognize and defend. Whatever they can do by peaceable and rational methods to improve their circumstances they ought to do, but let them not suppose that they can grasp by violence any real advantages. The right of every man to work for whom he will and for what wages he chooses to accept is the cornerstone of our free institutions. It is a monstrous blunder for workingmen to deny this right to any honest man. Some of them do not seem to see how deeply their welfare and happiness are concerned in the preservation of this sacred right. Let them think well upon these words of one of themselves, who stood when he spoke at the head of the nation:

"Nowhere in the world is presented a government of so much liberty and equality. To the humblest and poorest amongst us are held out the highest privileges and positions. The present moment finds me at the White House, yet there is as good a chance for you, children, as there was for my fathers. Again I admonish you not to be turned from your stern purpose of defending our beloved country and its free institutions by any arguments urged by ambitious and designing men. To save these institutions for our children, to keep these paths of privilege and preferment open to all, there must be no despotisms here, not even for beneficent ends.

Workingmen want no other weapons than liberty and light. By peaceful and orderly measures they will the more speedily and surely gain the ends they seek; by any other measures they will undermine and shatter the civil structure which is the shelter and defence of all they hold dear."

The ways of getting this matter before the people are numerous. This book will be sold in every city, town and hamlet in this country. It is gotten up for the benefit of the masses, with the object of making it as brief, cheap and to the point as possible. A very effectual way, also, is to advocate this matter to your friends. Tell them to get a book, organize associations and societies, with names similar to this book. Such cannot but help interest the masses. Go in the highways and the byways and preach it. Try and comply with the requirements of that grand old book this time, if you never did before, by not letting your light shine under a bushel.

A FEW EXTRACTS FROM TWO OF OUR DAILY PAPERS.

Oh, What a Philosopher!

To the Editor:

Some "philosopher" wonders "what becomes of all the men who are superseded by women. This is as perplexing a query as what becomes of all the pins." That philosopher must be as blind as a puppy. He is not a workingman—at any rate, not a mechanic. Every mechanic knows that labor-saving machinery has thrown hundreds of thousands into the streets, where they join the army of the unemployed in all our great cities and the desperate characters of the highway. I have heard of the fellow who couldn't see the forest on account of the great trees obstructing his view. This philosopher equals him in sagacity. Who would not be a philosopher?

He Starved to Death.

James Maher, a native American, after wandering about for eight days without food, looking for work, fell senseless from fatigue and starvation at the Brooklyn tower of the bridge yesterday afternoon. He died later at the Brooklyn City Hospital.

No Work—Death by a Rope.

William L. Heckerman, a man of forty years, hung himself last night in a shed at the rear of his house, 34 Cherry street, Jersey City. He was a carpenter, but could get no work. His body was discovered this morning suspended by a piece of clothesline.

Who Has Work for This Man?

To the Editor:

I come to you feeling assured of your sympathy and trust, hoping some kind reader will help my husband to get employment. He worked three years for a party who has taken smaller business, and therefore does not require help now. This threw my husband out of work over three months ago. He is willing to do anything honest. He is strictly temperate and can give good references. Any person helping him to get work will lighten the burden and cheer the heart of his sickly wife.

Mrs. E. J. W., 292 First avenue.

Hoboken, Sept. 23.—Frank Herdenrich, nineteen years old, committed suicide last night by hanging himself in his bedroom. He had been out of work for some time, and had frequently threatened suicide.

New York, Sept. 23.—Charles E. Taintor, a real estate broker, forty years old, of 11 West Eleventh street, was found dead in the bathroom of his home early this morning. A servant noticed the odor of gas, and traced it to the bathroom. The door was locked. Alarmed, she summoned a policeman, who broke open the door, finding Mr. Taintor's body on the floor. The man had turned on the gas, after plugging the keyhole of the door and closing the windows. On the table in his room was an incoherent letter addressed to his wife, who is in the country with their two boys. The letter concluded:

"It is more than distressing to me that I have been unable to make myself and family happy. I have always tried to maintain you and yours in circumstances you deserve, but I cannot do so. I am truly sorry I have failed to make you happy." The letter was not signed.

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